

Boswell Briefing...

By Congressman Leonard Boswell

Supporting veterans benefits everyone

In perilous international times like these, we are once again reminded of the many sacrifices made by the countless men and women who have served our great country. We must always remember that freedom is never free.

As a veteran who served in the Army for 20 years, including two tours in Vietnam, I understand the need to provide our veterans with the care and benefits they were promised and deserve. Congress must provide the Veterans Administration (VA) with the resources to accomplish this goal.

Most people are well aware of the VA's mission to provide quality healthcare for our veterans, but the VA's influence on our nation's healthcare system goes far beyond veterans' care.

The VA is a world leader in treating spinal cord injuries, blind rehabilitation, post-traumatic stress disorder, and substance abuse. The VA medical system introduced the pacemaker, has made major innovations in prosthetics, and was instrumental in the development of the CAT scan.

The VA is an industry leader in surgical quality assessment, computerized medical records, tele-health, preventive screening, immunizations, and pain management. The VA also is a pioneer in the treatment of the diseases of aging. The field of geriatrics, the clinical specialty of caring for the elderly, was developed in the VA.

The VA also plays a major role in educating health care professionals. It

currently funds approximately nine thousand positions in graduate medical education. The VA has trained many of our nation's practicing physicians.

In terms of medical research, the VA is among industry leaders. It is currently working to improve health care in many ways, including: reducing high cholesterol levels in heart disease patients, advancing drug treatments for psychotic disorders, expanding therapies to reduce substance abuse, focusing on therapy to reduce strokes, reducing high blood pressure in diabetics, increasing access to care for patients with major depression, reducing hospital readmission for heart failure patients, developing improved wheelchairs, and concentrating on specific rehabilitation issues.

Part of the VA's mission is to assist veterans and their communities during emergencies. The VA has provided volunteers to supply health care and medical support during natural disasters and other catastrophic events. This mission takes on even greater importance given the threats we face today.

Congress must continue to work with the VA must to improve and ensure quality care. We must continue to recognize the critical roll the VA plays in our nation's health care system as a whole.

If you have comments or are having difficulty with a federal agency call my office toll-free 1-888-432-1984.
